

This I believe

Rachel Wu (17) 314

There was a secret corner in my cabinet. In that corner used to lurk my sketchbook, paintbrushes, pencils and a voluminous journal on art history. Those are the things I hold most dearly to my heart; and yet I could not summon enough courage to bring those items out of the shadows of my cabinet, let alone show them to the world. I hated myself for not being able to do so. It takes hours to conceive a sketch, and another few hours to sit down and digest my book; I just could not trust myself to balance the see-saw of my interest and studies. Besides, I never had former training in art- how was I supposed to earn a place in the art world? My passion became something like a threat to my future. This emotional morass battled with me for a long time; until a single character- as clichéd as it sounds- stepped into the scene.

I cannot recall where or how I met her, but her story remains clear as crystal to me. Grandma Moses was different from other famous painters in art history. She only started painting during her late seventies, working with canvas and house paint and no training at all. I was surprised; this revelation brought down my idea that all artists had artistic skills inculcated into them from a very young age. An art collector came across her paintings in a drug store window- and this quirk of happenstance shot her to fame. What I adored most about Grandma Moses was her simplicity. She couldn't fathom why "people made such a great fuss" over her or why they paid ten thousand dollars for something she originally sold for five. She viewed art as something she enjoyed doing and only that.

I've always understood passion as a potent force that drives a person's course of life. But Grandma Moses made me understand that passion was also a very simple thing. She taught me that passion can be the very fount of happiness in life, whether or not you started off late, whether or not you achieve world renown. Grandma Moses built the foundations of her paintings purely on passion; she did not expect her passion to generate fame or wealth. Again this taught me that the key to achieve happiness in life is not a grandiose plan for the future- but to simply follow your passion.

I have moved my sketchbook and other art materials to my desk. Now that I am not afraid of chasing after this passion of mine, I find that opportunities lie everywhere. I may not become Leonardo or Picasso or Van Gogh; but I will definitely be happy. American author Ray Bradbury once said, "Jump off the cliff and build your wings on the way down." This I believe.

(470 words)